

ACT II] LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

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Mrs. Erlynne. Oh, no! I do the encouraging.
But you will
make me a handsome settlement, Windermere,
won't you?

Lord Windermere. [*Frowning.*] Is that what you
want to talk
to me about to-night?

Mrs. Erlynne. Yes.

Lord Windermere. [*With a gesture of impatience.*]
I will not talk
of it here.

Mrs. Erlynne. [*Laughing.*] Then we will talk of it on
the terrace.
Even business should have a picturesque
background. Should
it not, Windermere? With a proper background
women can
do anything.

Lord Windermere. Won't to-morrow do as well?

Mrs. Erlynne. No; you see, to-morrow I am going
to accept
him. And I think it would be a good thing if I
was able
to tell him that I had—well, what shall I say?—
£2000 a year
left to me by a third cousin—or a second
husband—or some
distant relative of that kind. It would be an
additional
attraction, wouldn't it? You have a delightful
opportunity
now of paying me a compliment, Windermere.
But you are
not very clever at paying compliments. I am
afraid Margaret
doesn't encourage you in that excellent habit.
It's a great
mistake on her part. When men give up saying
what is
charming, they give up thinking what is
charming. But
seriously, what do you say to £2000? £2500, I
think. In
modern life margin is everything. Windermere,,
don't you
think the world an intensely amusing place? I
do!

[*Exit on terrace with Lord Windermere.*

*Music strikes up
in ball-room.*

Lady Windermere. To stay in this house any longer
is impossible.
To-night a man who loves me offered me his
whole life. I
refused it. It was foolish of me. I will offer him
mine now.
I will give him mine. I will go to him! [*Puts on
cloak
and goes to the door, then turns back. Sits down
at table
writes a letter, puts it into an envelope, and leaves
it on table.*]
Arthur has never understood me. When he reads
this, he will.
He may do as he chooses now with his life. I
have done with
mine as I think best, as I think right. It is he
who has broken
the bond of marriage—not I. I only break its
bondage. [*Exit.*

*Parker enters L and crosses towards the ball-
room R. Enter
Mrs. Erlynne.*

Mrs. Erlynne. Is Lady Windermere in the ball-
room?

Parker. Her ladyship has just gone out.